launched by the oil companies both on their own and also under direction of Government from time to time to check malpractices. To prevent adulteration various steps like blue dyeing of kerosene (PDS), furfural doping, filter paper test, stock reconciliation, checking of retail outlets by mobile laboratories, etc. are taken by oil companies.

**IOC offer to buy equity of IPCL**

97. SHRI V. N. GADGIL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether IOC offered to buy 25 percent of equity of IPCL at the price mentioned by Government; and

(b) why the offer was rejected?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) and (b) There was no offer from IOC to buy 25% equity of IPCL at the price mentioned by the Government. However, IOC had only indicated its expression of interest to bid for the equity in IPCL.

**Exemption of customs duty for exploration operations**

98. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any decision to exempt the oil PSU's from customs duty for exploration operations;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government are giving any incentive to the private sector in this regard; and

(d) if so, whether the same is extended to the PSU's also?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) and (b) As per Customs Notification No. 20/

99 dated 28.2.99 (as amended by Notifications 43/99 and 102/99) issued by Deptt. of Revenue, zero customs duty has been made applicable in respect of capital goods required in connection with Petroleum Exploration Licenses and Mining Leases, issued or renewed on or after 1.4.99, granted by the Central or State Government to ONGC and OIL on nomination basis, subject to fulfillment of specified conditions.

(c) and (d) Import of machinery, plants, materials and supplies by the contractors and their sub-contractors under the Production Sharing Contracts (PSC) is exempted from customs duty subject to fulfillment of specified conditions. This exemption covers the national oil companies/PSUs also to the extent of their participation in the PSCs.

**Share Holders of GAIL**

99. SHRI KHAGEN DAS: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the share holding of Government of India, Enron, IOC, ONGC, British Gas and Foreign Institutional Investors (FII) in GAIL;

(b) whether there is any lock in provision to prevent sale of shares by FII; if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether IOC and ONGC have any representatives in GAIL board;

(d) the number of non-Government representatives in the board;

(e) whether any step is being taken to prevent entry of Enron and entry in GAIL's Board; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) A statement is attached. (*See* below)